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ABSTRACT

To discover the opinions of high school teachers regarding the need for teaching reading skills, an amended Vaughan Scale was administered to 388 teachers in 15 high schools in Michigan. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions to which teachers responded on a Likert-type scale. The results supported the following conclusions: (1) teaching reading skills to students is not a waste of time, (2) reading teachers should not be the only ones to teach students how to study, (3) teachers should teach students how to think on an interpretive as well as literal level, and (4) teachers should show that they, too, enjoy reading. Twenty references are listed. (HOD)

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SECONDARY READING:

WHAT HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS THINK

A
Research Study
of
Secondary Teachers' Opinions
on the
Need for Teaching Reading Skills

by
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Western Michigan University

This project was supported by a grant from the Faculty Research Fund
of Western Michigan University.

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ABSTRACT

Reading ability is needed by all individuals in our country. Reading instruction usually ends at grade six but it should continue through the high school years. Secondary students must master the skills needed to read expository prose so as to master the content courses they take. However, high school teachers may not really believe in this need and students may not receive appropriate reading instruction. As a result, many states require secondary teachers to take at least one reading methods course. This could alleviate the situation to a degree, but do secondary teachers believe they should teach reading skills?

The purpose of the study was to discover the opinions of high school teachers regarding their feelings about the need for teaching reading skills. The Vaughan Scale (amended) was used to gather information. Fifteen high schools were involved in the study. There were six rural schools (N=130); three urban schools (N=135); and six suburban schools (N=123).

From the sample population, these conclusions were drawn:

1. Most high school teachers are in strong agreement that teaching reading skills to students is not a waste of time.

2. The reading teacher is not the only one who should teach students how to study.

3. Secondary teachers agree that they should teach their students how to think on an interpretive as well as literal level.

4. Teachers should show that they, themselves, enjoy reading.

The recommendation is made for further study into the knowledge of reading skills that is understood by secondary teachers. Are they really aware of the reading skills needed by their students?

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the past, the ability of individuals to read has been an important factor in their own well being as well as the society in which they live (Stanchfield, 1963). Today this is even more important and steps must be taken to ensure reading skill development (Cushenbury, 1982). However, learning to read and reading to learn are long-term developmental processes reflecting the individual growth pattern/potential of students and cannot be mastered at a specific or pre-determined age/grade level (Early, 1973). Instead, such skills must be taught, learned, nurtured and expanded throughout all levels of education; secondary as well as elementary (Vacca, 1981).

Introduction. As students progress through the grades, they learn to read and read to learn, but they do so with different degrees of proficiency and achievement (Cushenbury, 1982). Moreover, the elementary school phases of reading instruction utilizes primarily narrative materials, but in middle schools and high schools, students read expository prose and this is more difficult to comprehend. Consequently, pupils experience problems in reading and learning and

their academic performance falters (Roe, et.al., 1983). Large numbers of high school students do not read as well as they could (Lehr, 1981) and upwards of twenty per cent of them require remedial assistance (Roe, et.al., 1983).

Reading instruction is needed in the high school and the disciplines (Greenlaw and Moore, 1982), but secondary teachers usually focus their efforts on teaching the subject and do not teach reading skills (Lehr, 1981). Yet now more than ever, such teaching is imperative (Criscuolo, 1982). Moreover, in addition to poor student academic and reading performance, significant changes in teacher certification requirements are bringing attention to and pressure on secondary reading instruction. Almost half the states in the conterminous United States mandate reading methods courses for all teachers (International Reading Association, 1981).

These realities, poor academic student performance, the need for continued reading instruction at all grade levels and the certification requirements, place the secondary teacher in a difficult position. These educators are faced with the need for teaching their subject, the various reading skills and perhaps, for taking reading courses. Given their previous training/background, one

wonders how they feel about the situation. There is a need for them to teach higher level reading skills in their subjects but they may not really believe they should and they may hold these beliefs for many reasons. Their attitudes may reflect personal views of the reading process as well as their own previous experiences. Their professional education is another factor and even the setting or location in which they teach could affect their views. At present, little is known about this last point, the area in which secondary teachers teach. How do teachers in suburban, urban, and rural areas feel about the need for teaching reading skills to their students?

Statement of the Problem. The purposes of the present study were to (A) discover the current attitudes and opinions of secondary teachers in relation to how they perceived the need for teaching reading skills to their students and (B) to determine if such thinking was delimited by the settings (geographical locations) in which the teachers taught. That is to say, do high school teachers believe that they are responsible for teaching reading skills to their students or do they think it is a waste of time? Does the location of the high school have an effect upon the attitudes/opinions of the teachers? What do secondary

teachers believe to be their most important teaching priority in regards to their subjects vis-a-vis appropriate reading skills? Should the English teacher and reading specialist be the only ones who should teach reading skills? Do opinions from teachers in rural areas differ from those in urban/suburban areas? If so, what are these differences? Responses to these and other questions formed the base of the study.

Significance of the Study. Teachers convey their opinions, preferences, likes and dislikes in many ways. Moreover, students pick up not only the verbal, but the non-verbal messages telegraphed to them (Rieck, 1977). If teachers like or dislike a subject, their students sense this and the message is sent regardless of attempts to disguise or cover up those attitudes. Therefore, knowing how teachers feel about teaching their students appropriate reading skills can lead to strengthening that process wherever needed in the high school subjects.

Knowledge of teacher attitude toward reading can be used as a base for meaningful inservice programs. Consequently, teachers can learn to provide their students with effective instruction, and generate a truly vital ambience for learning. Then, in addition to becoming

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better readers, students will learn much more about the
disciplines (Roe, et.al., 1983) and high schools will be
more vital learning centers for all concerned (Vacca, 1981).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Interest in the field of reading is continuing to gain momentum among high school teachers here in the United States. Now, more is being written about secondary reading than ever before (Vacca, 1981). Reading, as a process, is enjoying much attention among many subject matter specialists because so few of their students read well (Roe, et.al., 1983).

The available literature contains an abundance of reading research studies in the secondary level. However, only a small minority of investigations measure secondary teacher's attitudes/opinions about the need for teaching reading skills to high school students. Moreover, relatively few of the attitude studies compare the location of the high school (rural setting, urban, or suburban) and teachers' views of reading. None using the Vaughan Scale in this context has been reported.

Previous research has tended to focus on emphasizing reading awareness among high school teachers (Criscuolo, 1982). Many of these studies were involved with in-service programs which were carried out in order to explain some reading techniques that teachers could use (Criscuolo, et.al.,

1980). Other foci or areas of emphasis were concerned with secondary remedial reading programs (Lehr, 1981), and the role of the high school reading specialist (Stanchfield, 1965) or special programs (Cushenbery, 1982).

Some attitude studies about secondary reading have focused on the preservice reading course. Many college/university students question the need for and resent having to take a reading methods course (Hoover, 1980). Yet, such attitudes can change. This was reported by Welle (1981) in her three year investigation about the effects of a reading methods course. She used the Vaughan (1977) Scale and compared pre/post course responses. After the sixteen week methods course, her students indicated a positive view on the need for teaching reading skills.

O'Rourke (1980) used the Vaughan Scale to sample the opinions of 480 teachers in junior and senior high schools. He concluded that English teachers are most likely to teach reading skills, but teachers of other subjects are not. Moreover, he found that those teachers who took a reading methods course had significantly higher (more positive) opinions about the need for teaching students appropriate reading skills than did their colleagues.

Usova (1978) reported the use of a 20 item Likert scale to measure the attitudes of secondary teachers in

256 secondary districts in Pennsylvania. The questionnaire was given to specific subject matter teachers in the various high schools. After the data were analyzed, Usova concluded that there are significant differences in attitude toward reading instruction among English, history, science, and mathematics teachers. The combined opinions of history and English teachers were significantly more favorable toward reading than those of math teachers.

Dupuis, et.al., (1979) measured attitudes of teachers in rural, urban, and suburban areas, but the thrust of the study was to increase teacher competency in reading. This was carried out by using a model inservice program in content area reading. At the outset, it was assumed that secondary teachers (1) had little or no knowledge of how to teach reading skills and (2) viewed the teaching of reading in a negative fashion. So, the primary goal was to change teacher's attitudes toward reading, without really knowing the nature of them. A workshop format was used to teach reading skills and attitude change. The results of the study showed that teachers in the workshop made a significantly greater positive attitude change than did control group teachers. They demonstrated a significantly greater knowledge of reading skills as well as an ability to teach them.

Lloyd (1984) conducted a pilot study using the Vaughan Scale and sampled the opinions of three small groups of educators. These were teachers in (1) a community college, (2) an urban high school, and (3) a graduate reading methods class for secondary teachers. After comparing questionnaire responses, he concluded that (1) most of the participating teachers believe that they should preteach the pertinent vocabulary of a reading assignment and (2) should show their students that they, themselves, enjoy reading. Moreover, the data show that these teachers believed they should help their students think at higher cognitive levels and assist them in setting purposes for reading.

From the available research regarding secondary teachers' opinions about the need for teaching reading skills it is possible to draw several conclusions. For example, it does appear to be true that secondary level reading methods courses do have a positive effect on the attitudes of those who take the course (Dupuis, et.al., 1979; Welle, 1981). Some teachers, such as those who teach English, are more aware of the need for teaching reading skills to their students, but many are not (Braam and Walker, 1973; Criscuolo, 1982; Greenlaw and Moore, 1982; O'Rourke, 1980; Otto, 1969; Roe, et.al., 1983; and Vaughan, 1977). Yet there are no reported studies of teacher attitudes/opinions

vis-a-vis high school location or setting. So a major informational gap exists at this time. As a result, the question (O'Rourke, 1980) remains unanswered: how do content (secondary) teachers feel about the need for teaching reading skills to their students and do their opinions/attitudes differ according to the location (rural, urban, suburban) of the school? The present study was carried out to discover the answer to this question.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In order to discover the attitudes of secondary teachers as to their opinions about the need for teaching reading skills to their students, a questionnaire was used. The data gathering instrument has been validated (Vaughan, 1977) and used with success in other investigations (Lloyd, 1984). For the present study, the researcher traveled to several high schools and administered the questionnaire on an informal basis. Teachers were not required to respond if they chose not to do so. Subsequently, the devices were collected and coded so that the name of the high school was protected. Thereafter, data were tabulated and treated. The results appear in the next chapter.

Instrumentation. The questionnaire that was used as the information gathering instrument was developed originally by Vaughan (1977). In it there are fifteen questions to which teachers responded on a Likert-type scale. The values ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) with a mid-point of 5 which represented no opinion one way or the other. (See following page).

Vaughan has indicated that his questionnaire does have construct validity. It is a reliable and valid measure

Teaching Reading Opinion Survey

It is important for you to express your opinion about the concepts noted in the questions/statements that follow. Your responses can be guides to future goals in secondary education and reading instruction.

Kindly use the following scale ranging from 0 (complete disagreement) to 10 (complete agreement). The mid-point of 5 means no opinion. If you strongly agree mark the appropriate number (6-10) or disagree (mark 0-4) and if you are undecided, mark 5.

1. A content area teacher is obligated to help students improve their reading ability.
2. Technical vocabulary should be introduced to students in content classes before they meet those terms in a reading passage.
3. The primary responsibility of a content teacher should be to impart subject matter knowledge.
4. Few students can learn all they need to know about how to read in six years of schooling.
5. The sole responsibility for teaching students how to study should lie with reading teachers.
6. Knowing how to teach reading in content areas should be required for secondary teaching certification.
7. Only English teachers should be responsible for teaching reading in secondary schools.
8. A teacher who wants to improve students' interest in reading should show them that he or she likes to read.
9. Content teachers should teach content and leave reading instruction to reading teachers.
10. A content area teacher should be responsible for helping students think on an interpretive level as well as a literal level when they read.
11. Content area teachers should feel a greater responsibility to the content they teach than to any reading instruction they may be able to provide.
12. Content area teachers should help students learn to set purposes for reading.
13. Every content area teacher should teach students how to read material in his or her content specialty.
14. Reading instruction in secondary schools is a waste of time.
15. Content area teachers should be familiar with theoretical concepts of the reading process.

[illegible]

Have you taken a reading methods course?

What is your major field of preparation?

What subject(s) do you teach?

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of teacher attitude. He reports a coefficient of internal consistency for the total scale as .87 (Cronbach's Alpha) and the median stability coefficient was .77 as measured by the Pearson product - moment correlations. These data support the high reliability of the instrument. Further statistical treatment revealed construct validity as well (Vaughan, 1977).

The questionnaire used in the present study is an adaptation of the Vaughan Scale. The changes that were made came from the results of a pilot study that was carried out to determine in part, ease of administration and data interpretation (Lloyd, 1984). The rating scale (1-10) was changed to (0-10) so that there would be an exact mid-point (5) representing no opinion (undecided). Moreover, three additional questions were included in order to gather other pertinent information:

Have you taken a reading methods course?

What is your major field of preparation?

What subject(s) do you (presently) teach?

Procedures. Data were gathered during the winter semester (January-April, 1984) because there would be few, if any, interruptions in the school instructional program. No major holidays would interfere with the investigation.

Fifteen high schools from the southwestern geographical region of Michigan were involved in the project. There were six rural schools (N=130); three urban schools (N=135); and six suburban schools (N=123), participating in it. The geographical area measured from Lansing south to the border and west to Muskegon. The researchers initially contacted school superintendents and principals and explained about the nature of the investigation. Then dates/times were agreed on for visiting the schools and administering the questionnaires. The researchers traveled to the schools, met with administrators and faculty, and administered the instrument as arranged. Teachers were assured that they were not required to participate if they so chose. Anonymity was assured and no high school or faculty would be named in the final report.

Data were collected accordingly, tabulated, and treated. This phase of the study is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

TREATMENT OF THE DATA AND FINDINGS

Data from fifteen high schools and three hundred eighty-eight teachers were gathered as previously described. They were then treated to determine means and standard deviations. Subsequently, the data were tabulated by area (rural - urban - suburban) and then graphed by area and school (R-1, R-2; U-1, U-2, etc.). Responses to each of the fifteen questions appear on the following pages.

The Tables. In order to properly report the findings, questionnaire statements were coded as follows:

1. COTE - A content area teacher is obliged to help students improve their reading ability.
2. TEVO - Technical vocabulary should be introduced to students in content classes before they meet those terms in a reading passage.
3. PRIM - The primary responsibility of a content teacher should be to impart subject matter knowledge.
4. SIXX - Few students can learn all they need to know about how to read in six years of schooling.
5. SOLR - The sole responsibility for teaching students how to study should lie with reading teachers.

6. CERT - Knowing how to teach reading in content areas should be required for secondary teaching certification.
7. ENGL - Only English teachers should be responsible for teaching reading in secondary schools.
8. LIKE - A teacher who wants to improve students' interest in reading should show them that he or she likes to read.
9. CONT - Content teachers should teach content and leave reading instruction to reading teachers.
10. THIN - A content area teacher should be responsible for helping students think on an interpretive level as well as a literal level when they read.
11. INST - Content area teachers should feel a greater responsibility to the content they teach than to any reading instruction they may be able to provide.
12. PURP - Content area teachers should help students learn to set purposes for reading.
13. SPEC - Every content area teacher should teach students how to read material in his or her content specialty.
14. TIME - Reading instruction in secondary schools is a waste of time.

TABLE I
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF SURVEY RESPONSES
FROM TEACHERS IN RURAL HIGH SCHOOL AREAS

		R-1 (N=21)		R-2 (N=42)		R-3 (N=16)		R-4 (N=16)		R-5 (N=26)		R-6 (N=9)		M (N=130)	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1.	COTE	7.33	--1.88	6.13	--3.21	7.47	--2.47	6.20	--2.43	6.04	--3.04	6.63	--3.07	6.63	--2.68
2.	TEVO	7.78	--1.90	7.21	--3.25	7.33	--1.88	7.87	--1.88	7.71	--2.37	8.00	--2.98	7.65	--2.38
*3.	PRIM	8.94	--1.06	7.32	--2.75	7.40	--2.95	7.20	--2.54	6.63	--3.56	6.50	--4.00	7.33	--2.81
4.	SIXX	6.33	--3.36	5.79	--3.53	6.33	--2.92	6.73	--2.94	5.50	--3.89	5.63	--3.62	6.05	--3.38
*5.	SOLR	2.28	--2.37	2.47	--3.24	0.60	--0.83	1.87	--2.14	1.96	--2.20	2.25	--1.91	1.91	--2.12
6.	CERT	4.44	--2.38	5.84	--2.86	5.87	--3.42	5.73	--2.96	5.04	--3.61	6.00	--4.11	5.49	--3.22
7.	ENGL	3.50	--2.75	3.66	--3.61	3.07	--3.06	2.40	--2.47	2.71	--3.06	4.13	--3.76	3.25	--3.12
8.	LIKE	7.89	--1.81	7.34	--2.53	8.20	--2.01	7.60	--1.76	6.92	--3.30	6.63	--2.07	7.43	--1.19
*9.	CONT	3.17	--2.46	3.95	--3.56	1.67	--2.64	3.00	--2.95	2.96	--3.20	3.88	--3.76	3.11	--3.10
10.	THIN	7.44	--1.76	8.21	--2.41	9.00	--1.13	8.27	--1.83	8.38	--1.69	7.63	--1.51	8.16	--1.72
*11.	INST	6.06	--2.60	6.79	--2.52	6.13	--2.10	6.93	--1.79	6.46	--2.96	7.13	--2.23	6.58	--2.37
12.	PURP	7.06	--2.31	6.92	--2.62	7.40	--2.13	6.60	--2.53	7.83	--1.93	6.75	--3.15	7.09	--2.45
13.	SPEC	6.67	--2.22	7.63	--2.35	7.93	--1.71	7.00	--2.04	7.46	--2.52	6.50	--3.21	7.20	--2.34
*14.	TIME	1.11	--1.29	2.47	--2.82	0.60	--1.40	0.33	--0.62	1.54	--2.50	1.75	--3.41	1.30	--2.01
15.	THEO	5.56	--2.25	5.95	--2.44	6.80	--2.65	6.27	--2.74	5.42	--3.11	6.50	--3.30	6.08	--2.75

TABLE II
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF SURVEY RESPONSES
FROM TEACHERS IN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL AREAS

	U-1 (N=69)	U-2 (N=51)	U-3 (N=15)	M (N=135)
	M SD	M SD	M SD	M SD
1. COTE	7.46--2.93	5.02--3.76	5.00--4.11	5.83--3.60
2. TEVO	7.46--2.93	6.44--3.74	5.30--3.89	6.40--3.52
*3. PRIM	5.82--4.01	6.05--4.06	5.30--4.27	5.72--4.11
4. SIXX	4.75--4.08	4.90--3.97	2.20--4.13	3.95--4.06
*5. SOLR	1.57--2.46	1.29--2.22	1.70--3.20	1.52--2.63
6. CERT	4.82--3.45	4.20--3.61	4.30--3.37	4.44--3.48
7. ENGL	2.77--3.10	1.98--2.54	2.30--3.20	2.35--2.95
8. LIKE	7.84--2.34	7.44--3.10	5.60--4.03	6.96--3.16
*9. CONT	2.93--2.93	3.02--3.28	2.60--3.03	2.85--3.08
10. THIN	8.09--2.65	7.24--3.18	7.10--2.96	7.48--2.93
*11. INST	5.82--3.14	6.95--2.93	6.70--3.16	6.49--3.08
12. PURP	6.80--3.04	6.71--2.99	5.00--3.06	6.17--3.03
13. SPEC	6.73--3.14	7.02--3.49	4.30--3.62	6.02--3.42
*14. TIME	1.59--2.64	1.12--2.05	0.20--0.63	0.97--1.77
15. THEO	6.54--2.86	5.95--3.05	4.60--3.34	5.70--3.08

TABLE III
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF SURVEY RESPONSES
FROM TEACHERS IN SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL AREAS

		S-1 (N=17)	S-2 (N=37)	S-3 (N=22)	S-4 (N=29)	S-5 (N=7)	S-6 (N=11)	M (N=123)
		M SD	M SD	M SD	M SD	M SD	M SD	M SD
1.	COTE	5.22--3.99	4.33--3.62	5.81--3.06	4.46--3.24	5.80--1.10	5.00--4.55	5.10--3.26
2.	TEVO	3.67--3.54	3.79--4.24	5.69--3.63	6.92--2.99	5.80--4.21	4.50--4.33	5.06--3.82
*3.	PRIM	2.44--3.71	5.29--4.11	6.81--2.88	7.33--3.57	3.00--4.12	5.10--3.93	4.89--3.72
4.	SIXX	2.44--3.50	2.83--3.56	4.81--3.87	5.71--3.74	2.80--2.95	4.20--4.24	3.80--3.64
*5.	SOLR	1.44--1.88	0.83--2.10	1.38--1.59	1.96--2.03	3.00--3.74	1.50--2.22	1.69--2.26
6.	CERT	5.89--1.69	4.71--3.62	4.69--2.85	3.50--2.99	5.80--3.83	4.80--4.10	4.90--3.18
7.	ENGL	1.56--2.35	2.71--3.45	2.25--1.95	2.54--2.46	2.20--1.48	0.90--1.60	2.03--2.22
8.	LIKE	3.00--4.30	6.58--3.88	6.75--3.91	6.88--2.27	8.20--1.64	8.00--2.67	6.61--3.11
*9.	CONT	4.00--2.65	2.42--3.36	2.06--2.21	2.46--2.62	2.20--2.28	1.90--3.04	2.51--2.69
10.	THIN	3.78--3.90	6.50--4.21	6.69--3.54	7.00--3.08	8.60--0.89	7.40--4.03	6.66--3.28
*11.	INST	6.00--3.12	6.21--3.18	5.31--3.05	6.96--2.51	6.20--3.19	5.40--3.53	6.01--3.10
12.	PURP	6.22--3.53	7.00--3.41	6.19--2.61	6.38--2.67	5.60--3.29	7.90--2.18	6.55--2.95
13.	SPEC	5.00--3.77	6.13--3.70	6.31--3.63	6.17--2.94	7.40--0.55	6.80--4.34	6.30--3.16
*14.	TIME	0.89--1.36	0.63--1.35	0.19--0.40	1.29--2.44	0.20--0.45	1.80--3.62	0.83--1.60
15.	THEO	6.44--3.13	5.96--2.49	5.44--3.53	5.92--2.48	6.80--1.64	6.80--2.78	6.23--2.68

15. THEO - Content area teachers should be familiar with theoretical concepts of the reading process.

It will be noted that selected questionnaire statements are marked (*). This indicates that the responses should be interpreted as pro reading (Vaughan, 1977). That is to say, if for example, teachers read statement 3, "The primary responsibility of a content teacher should be to impart subject matter knowledge," and mark in the 0 or 1 box, the interpretation should be strongly in favor of reading because it would seem to indicate that content teachers have more to do than teach their subject (Vaughan, 1977).

On the previous pages data are reported for each area and each participating school. Table I shows the responses for the rural high schools and lists means/standard deviations for each statement and school. Table II contains the findings from the urban high schools and Table III contains information from the high school in the suburban settings.

The Graphs. It is readily apparent that the tables presented on the previous pages are somewhat difficult to interpret. It was decided, therefore, to rearrange the format and present the findings in graphic form. On the following pages response data are presented to show the deviation from no opinion (5) in a format that

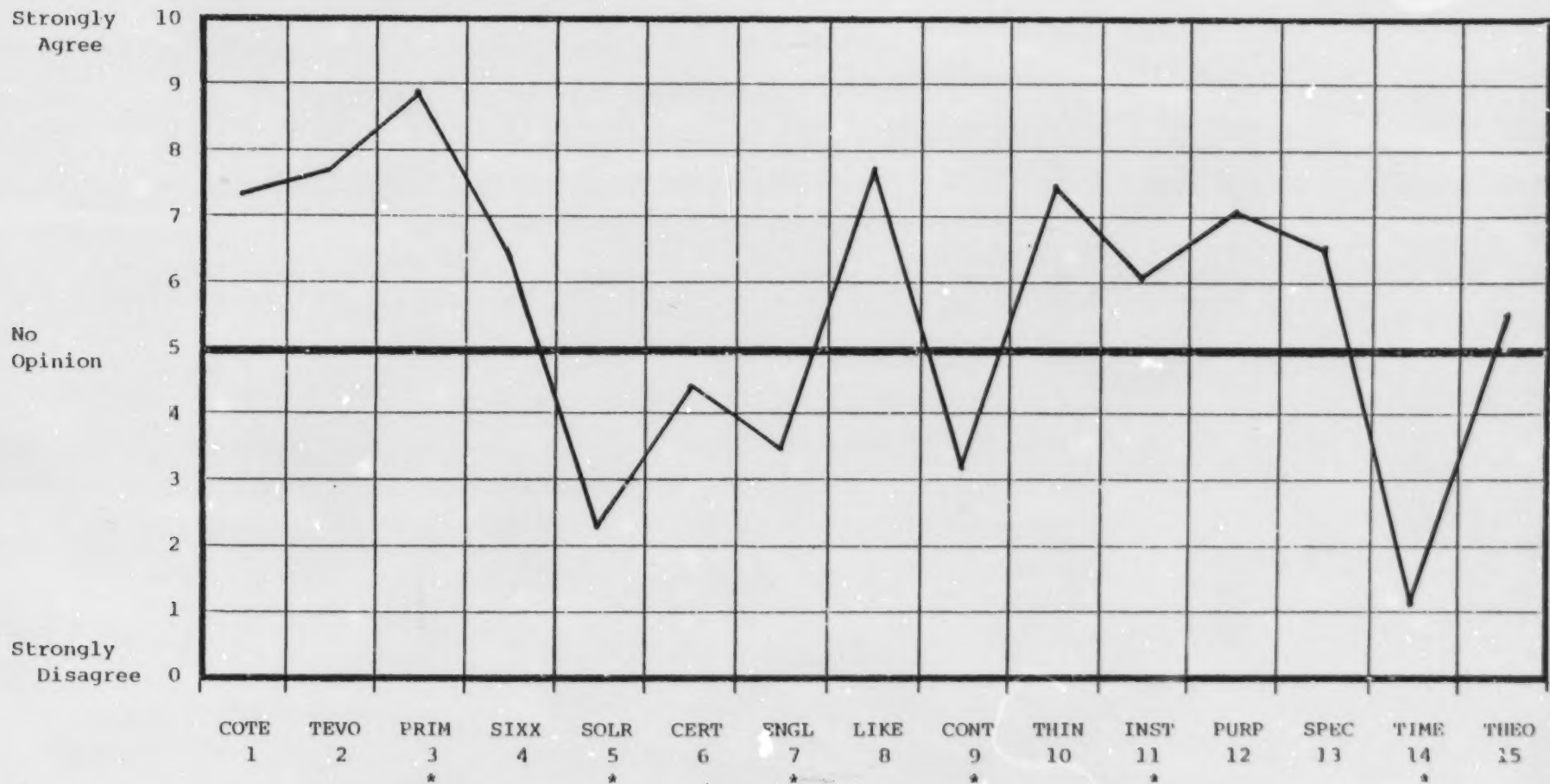
clearly represents the various reference points. Moreover, each graph represents one school. That is to say, R-1 indicates the opinions of teachers in the first rural school sampled. R-2 shows the opinions of teachers in the second rural school, and so on.

An examination of the graphs reveals that five (5) means no opinion. Zero (0) means strongly disagree and ten (10) means strongly agree. To realistically interpret teacher responses, it was decided that the numerical results should be combined in a fashion that would place them in perspective. Therefore, scores between four (4) and six (6) would represent no opinion. Scores between two (2) and four (4) would represent some disagreement. Scores between six (6) and eight (8) would represent some agreement. Scores between zero (0) and two (2) would represent strong disagreement and scores between eight (8) and ten (10) would indicate strong agreement.

Further examination of the graphs reveals a number of important similarities as well as differences. Teachers in the first rural school, Graph 1, are in strong agreement that the primary responsibility of the content teacher is to impart subject matter knowledge. All other rural teachers were merely in agreement with that point. Moreover, those same (R-1) teachers were in strong agreement

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural 1 Urban _____ Suburban _____

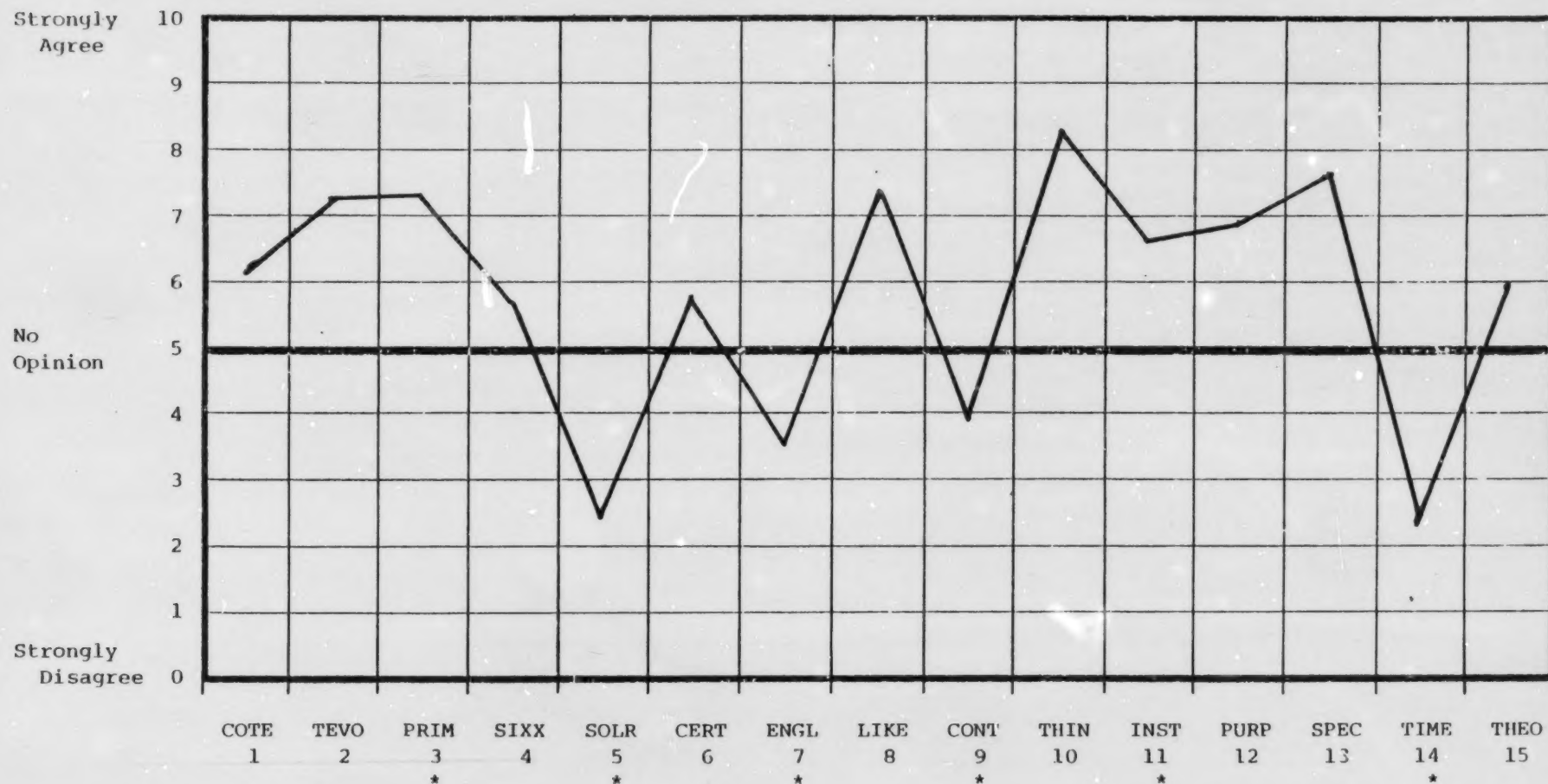


* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 9 No 11 No response 1

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural 2 Urban _____ Suburban _____

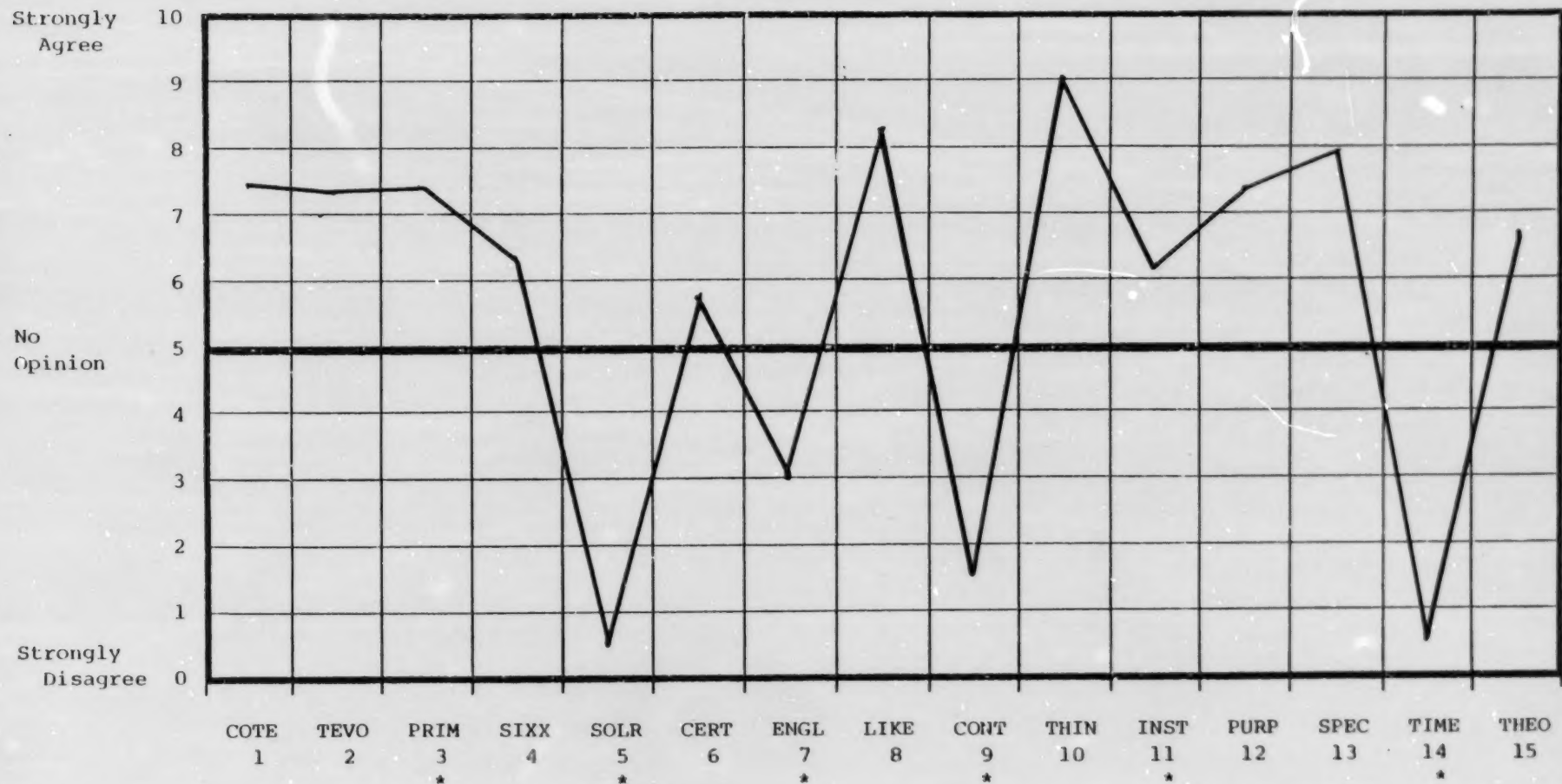


* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 16 No 25 No response 1

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural 3 Urban Suburban

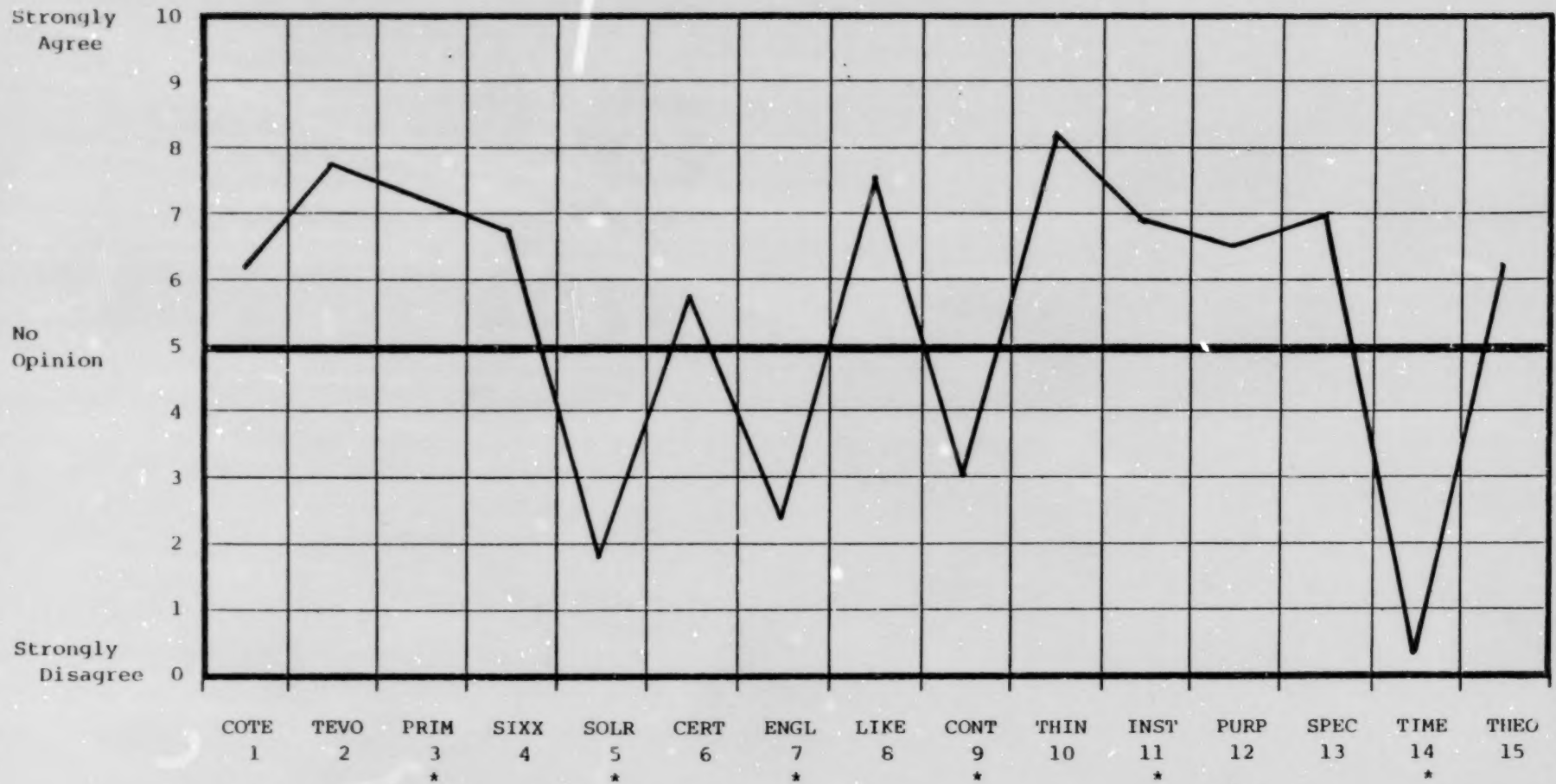


* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 4 No 12 No Response 0

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural 4 Urban _____ Suburban _____

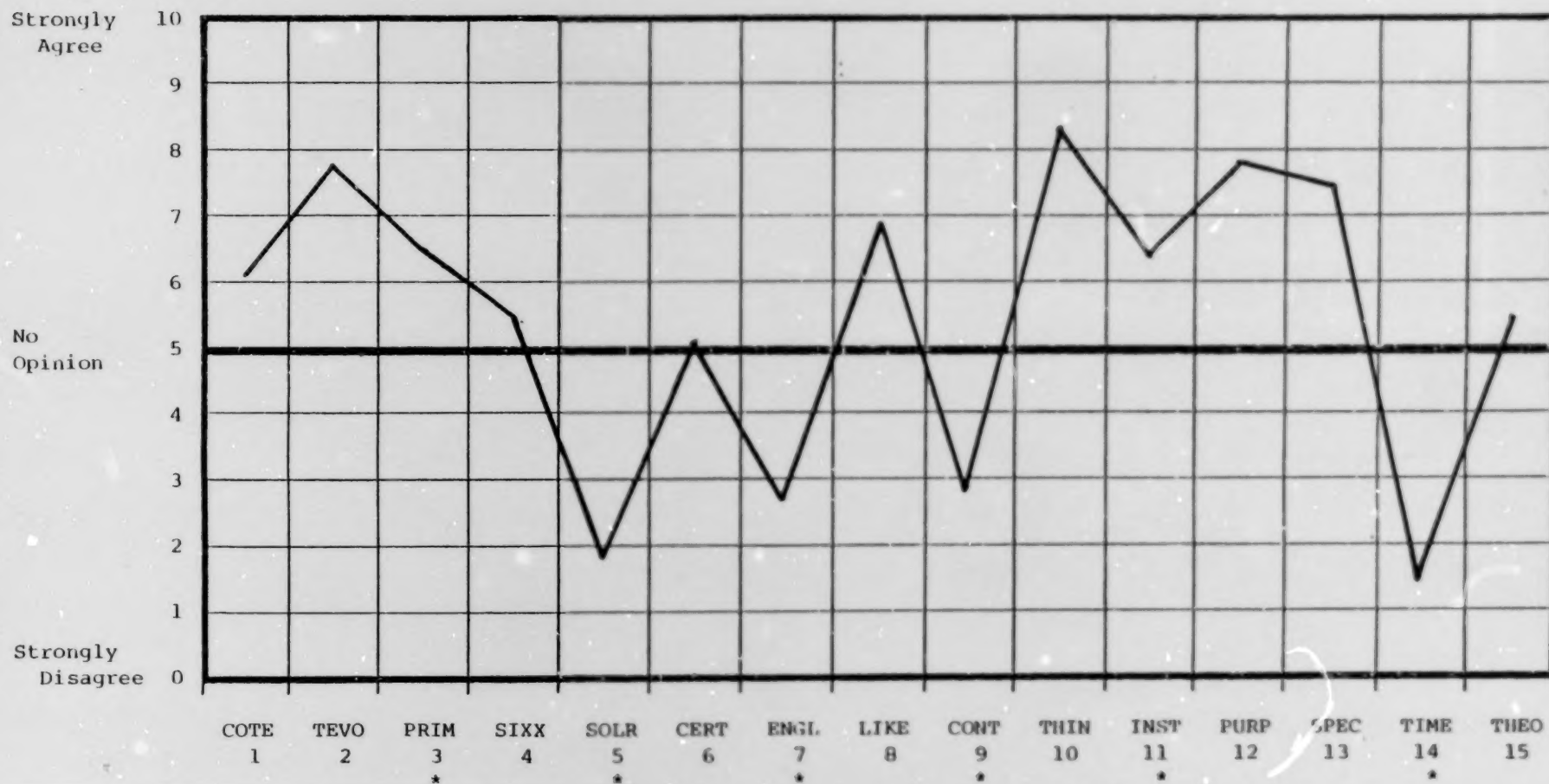


* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 4 No 11 No Response 1

GRAPH - 5
SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

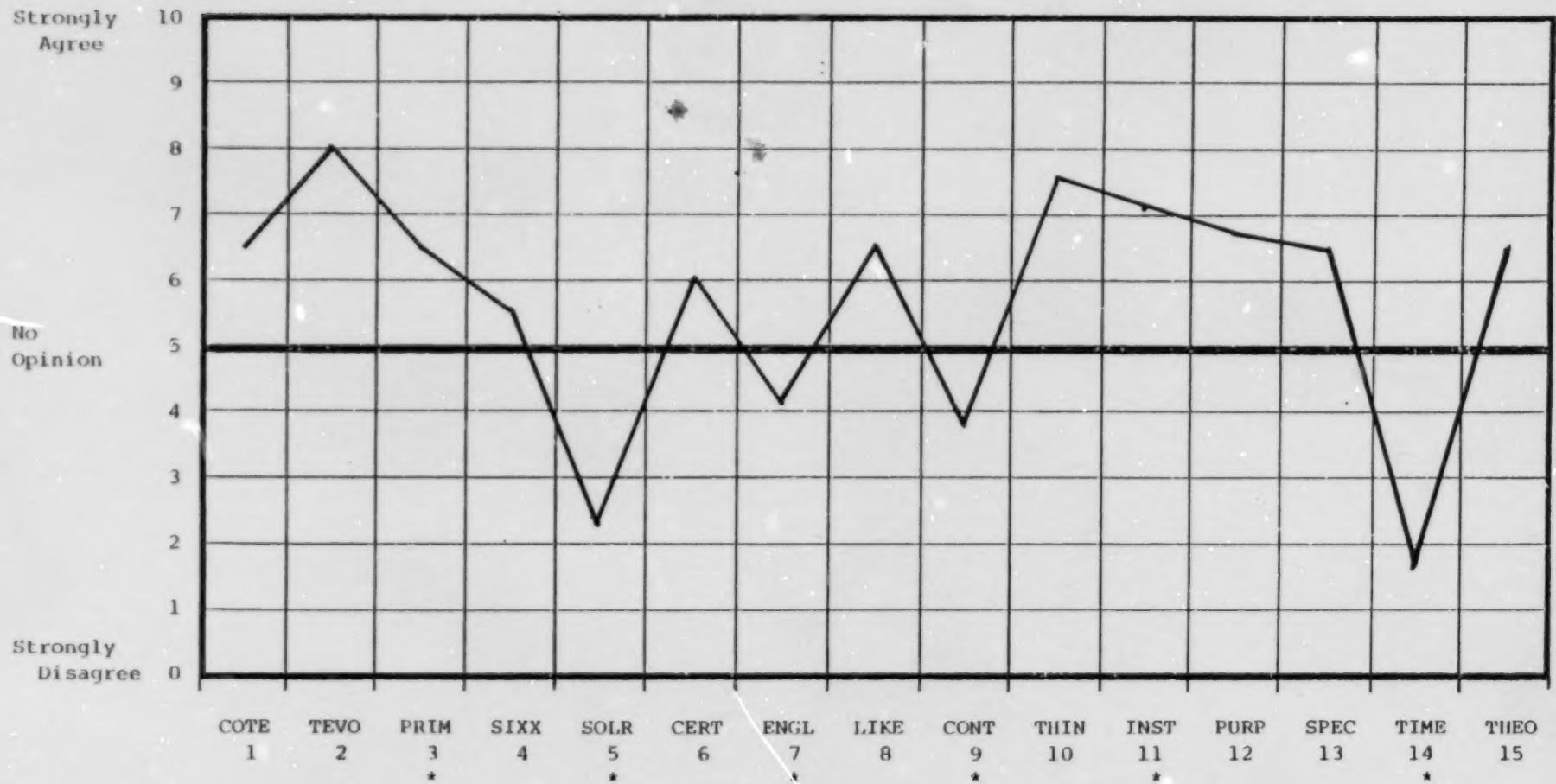
High school area Rural 5 Urban _____ Suburban _____



* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 8 No 18 No Response 0

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural 6 Urban _____ Suburban _____

* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 3 No 6 No Response 0

that reading instruction in secondary schools is not a waste of time. And interestingly enough, most rural teachers concurred.

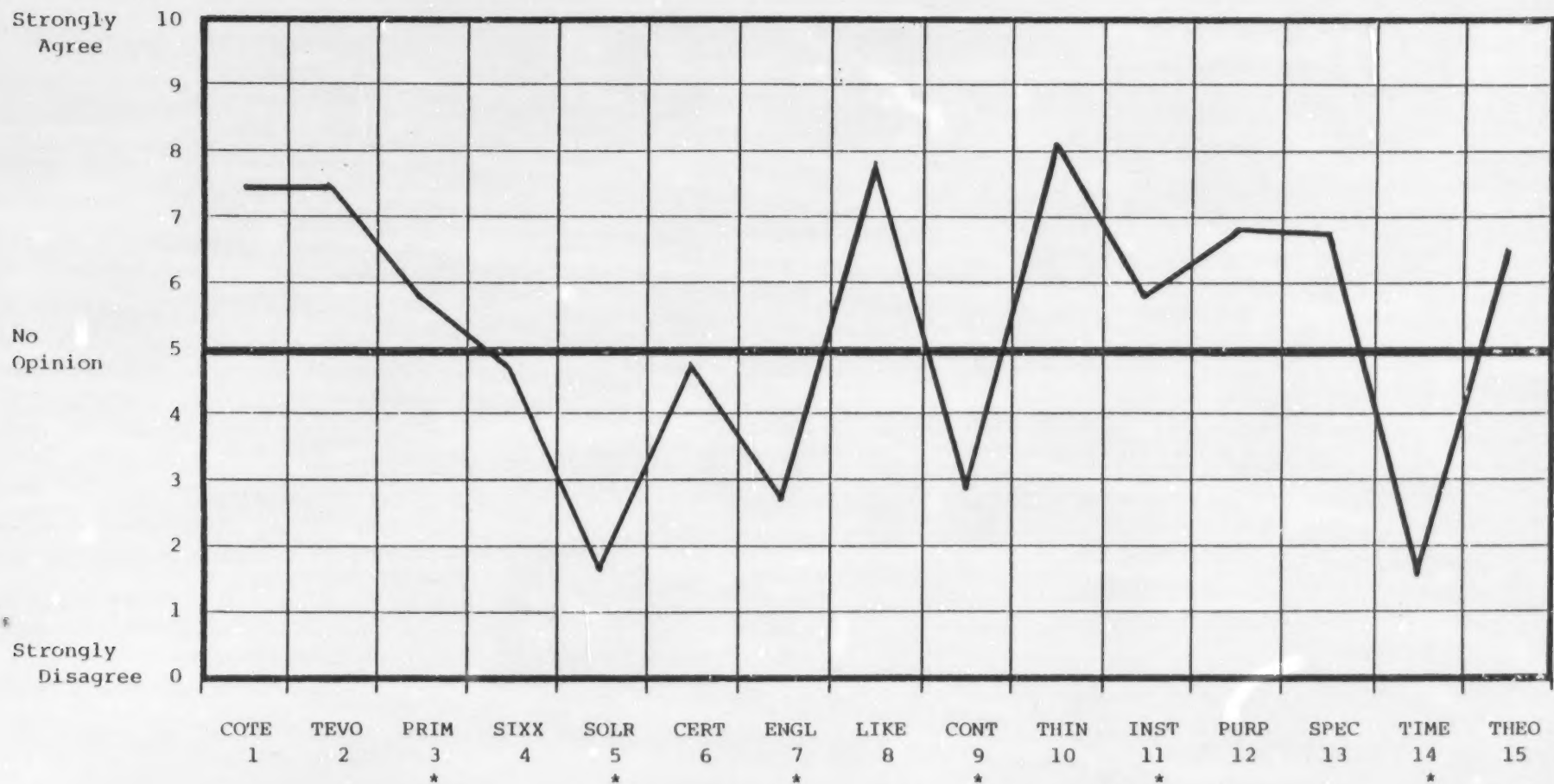
Those teachers who taught in the third rural school, Graph 3, appeared to have the strongest opinions in favor of the need for teaching reading skills to their students. They strongly disagreed with the point that the sole responsibility for teaching students how to study should lie with the reading teacher. They also strongly disagreed that content area teachers should teach content and leave reading instruction to reading teachers. And they strongly disagreed with the point that reading instruction in secondary schools is a waste of time.

On the agreement side of the scale, these teachers (R-3) were strongly in favor of showing students that they like to read. They also believed that they have the responsibility to help students think on an interpretive level.

Urban area teachers seem to have some opinions that are similar to their rural colleagues and other opinions that differ. Teachers in urban areas are in strong disagreement with the idea that the sole responsibility for teaching students how to read should lie with reading

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban 1 Suburban _____

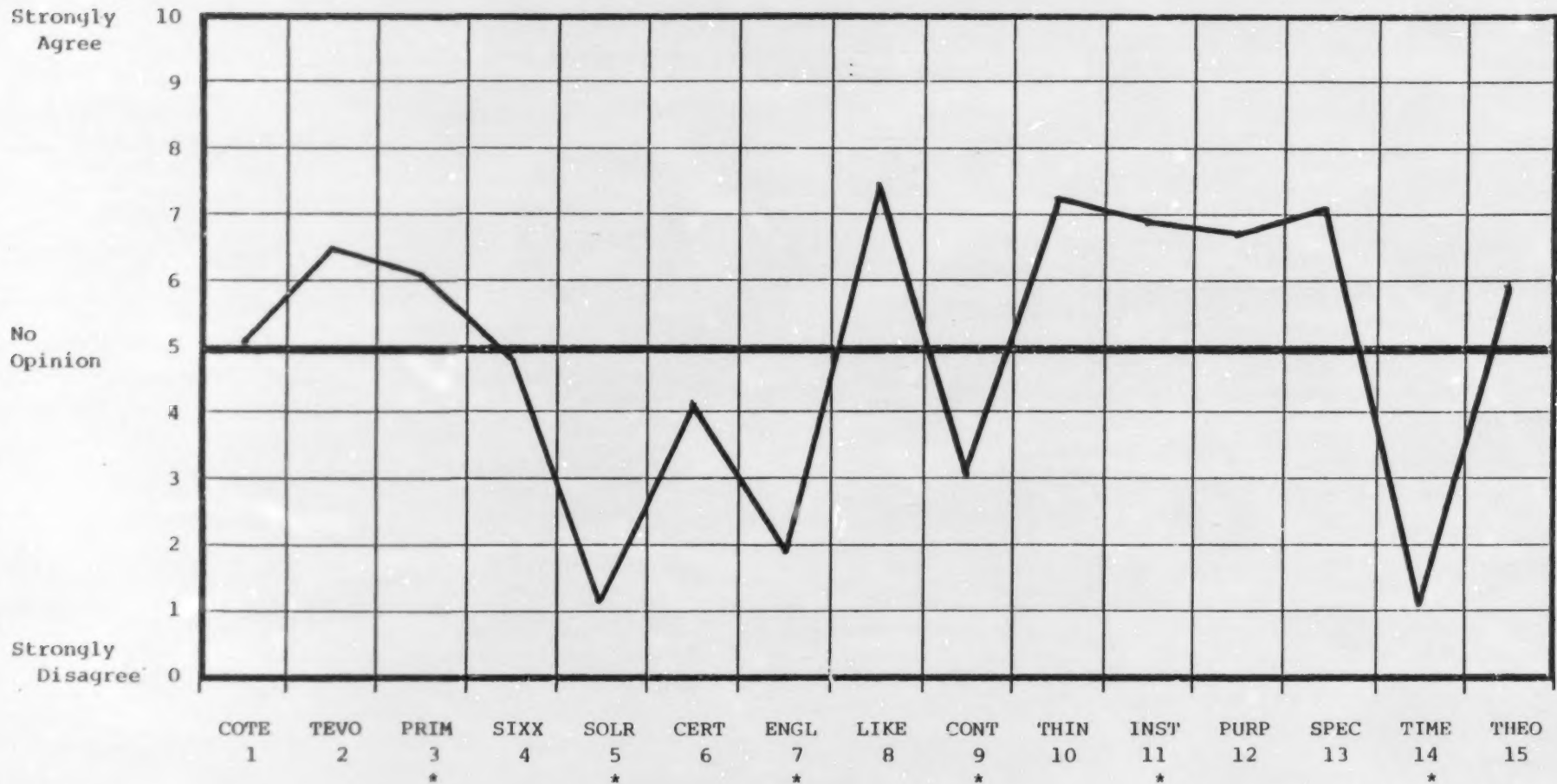


* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 32 No 36 No Response 1

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban 2 Suburban _____

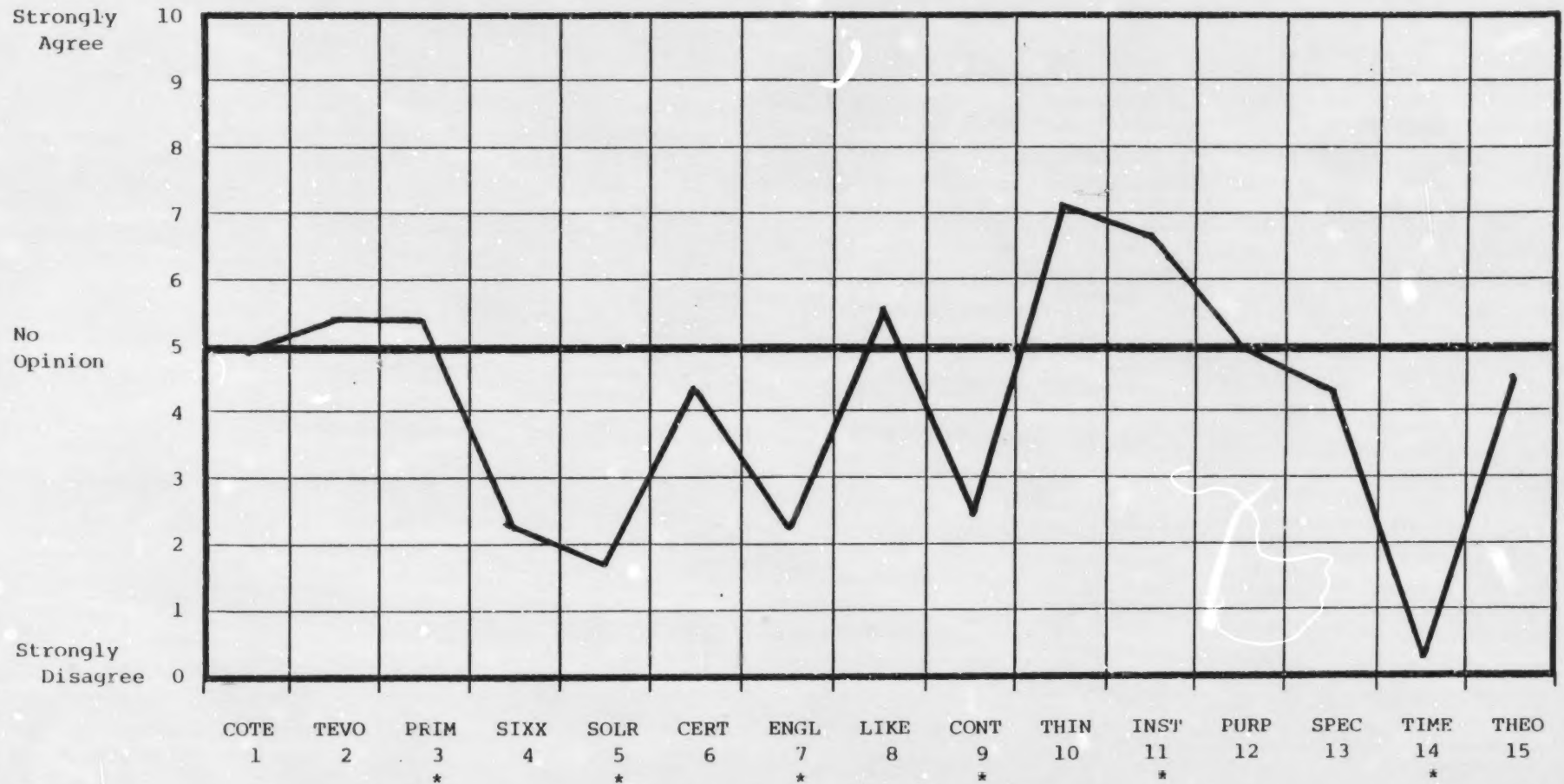


* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 14 No 37 No Response 0

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban 3 Suburban _____



* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 4 No 10 No Response 1

teachers. They also disagree strongly that reading instruction in secondary schools is a waste of time.

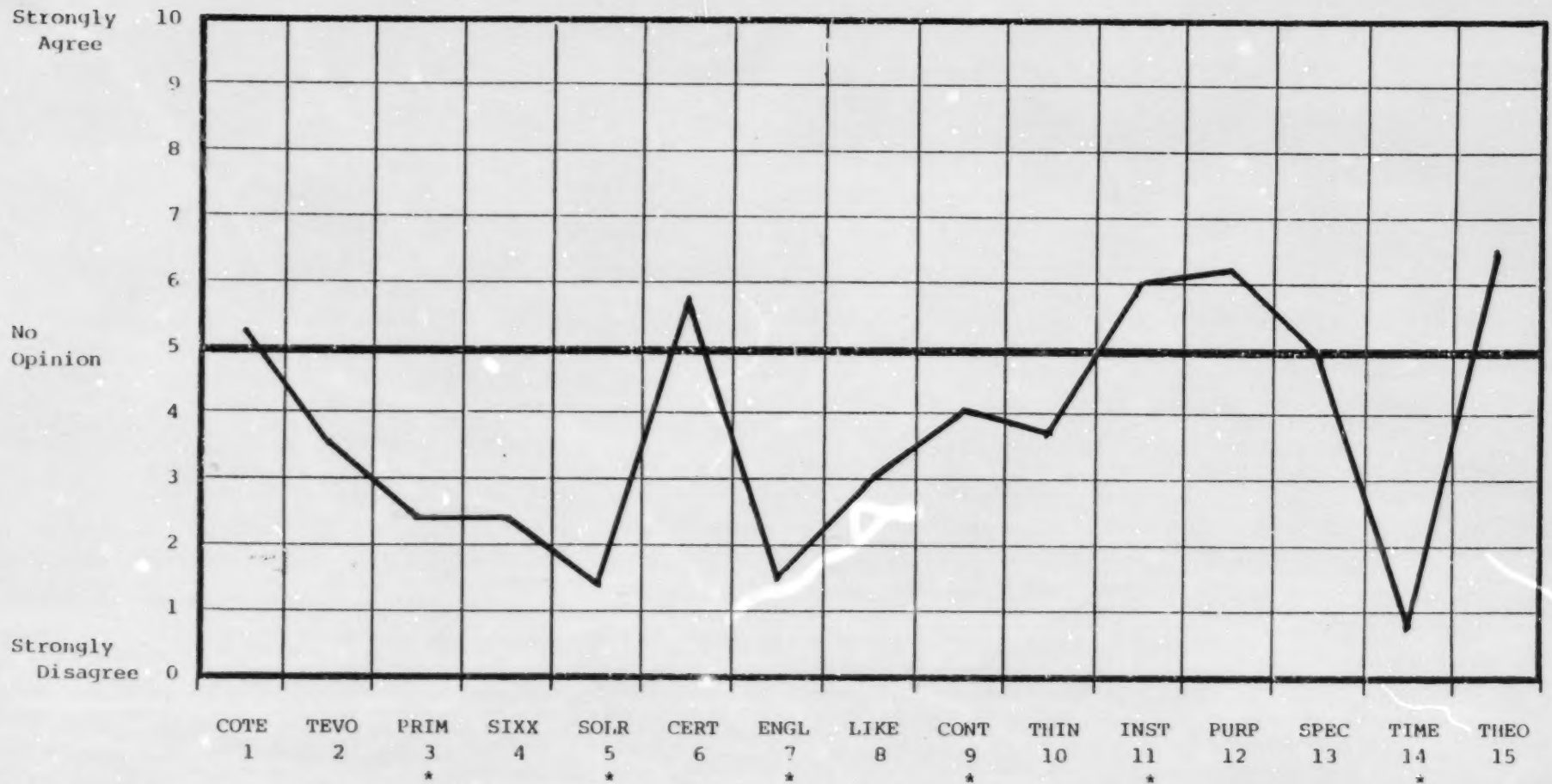
Suburban teachers seemed to have few strong opinions regarding the points noted in the questionnaire. However, there were some decided differences between the high schools sampled. Teachers in suburban high school one (S-1) strongly disagreed with the premise that the sole responsibility for teaching students how to study should lie with the reading teacher. They were also in strong disagreement that only English teachers should be responsible for teaching reading in secondary schools. And the strongest feelings of disagreement were noted for statement 14, reading instruction in secondary schools is a waste of time.

Teachers in suburban high school two (S-2) also disagreed strongly that the sole responsibility for teaching students how to study should lie with reading teachers and that reading instruction in secondary schools is a waste of time. Their opinions about the other points on the questionnaire were less strong.

An examination of the graphs for the other high schools reveals a consistency of opinion regarding statement 5 (SOLR) and statement 14 (TIME). In addition, teachers in suburban high school six (S-6) strongly disagreed with

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban _____ Suburban 1



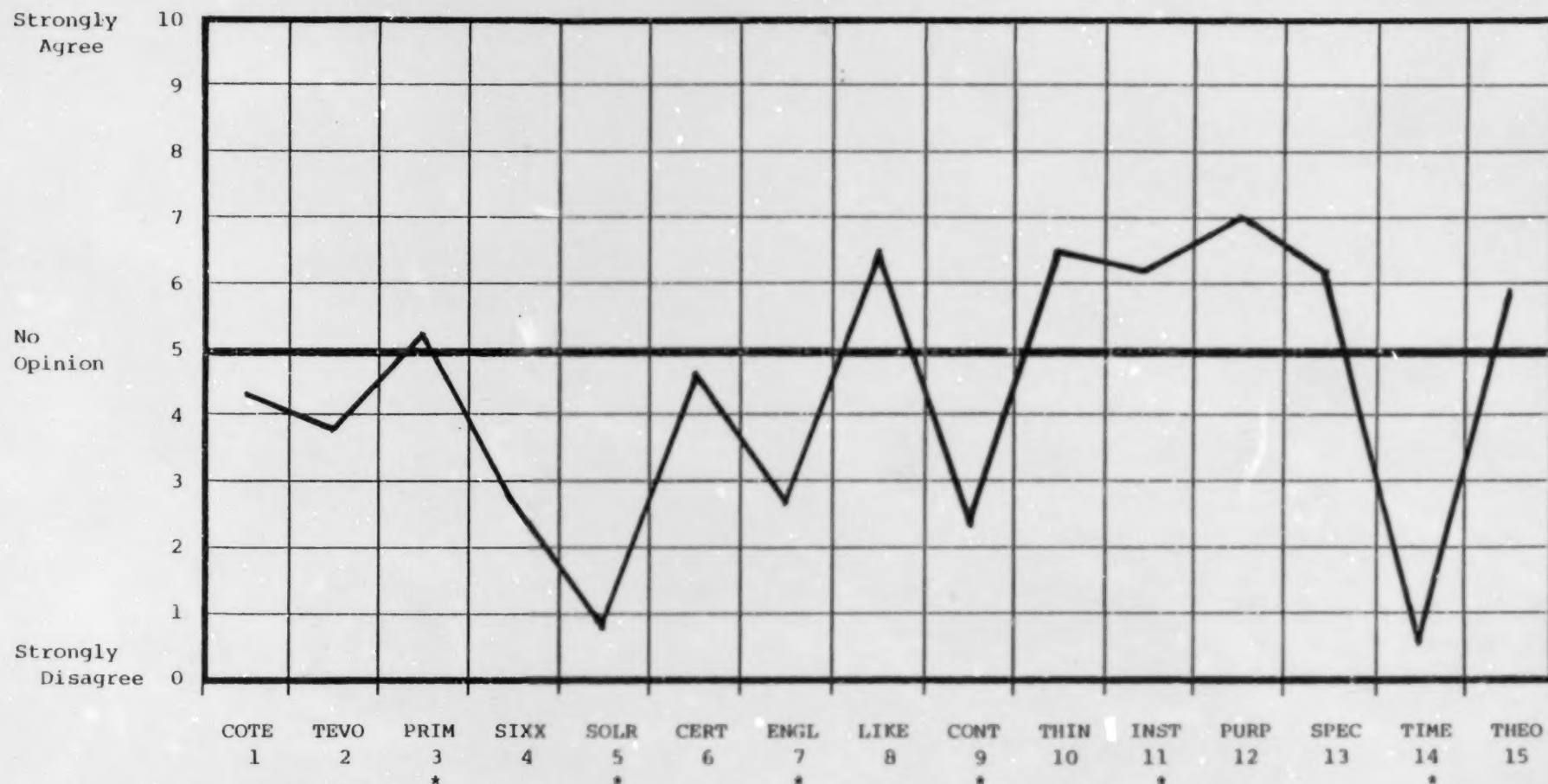
* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 1 No 15 No response 1

GRAPH - 11

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban _____ Suburban 2

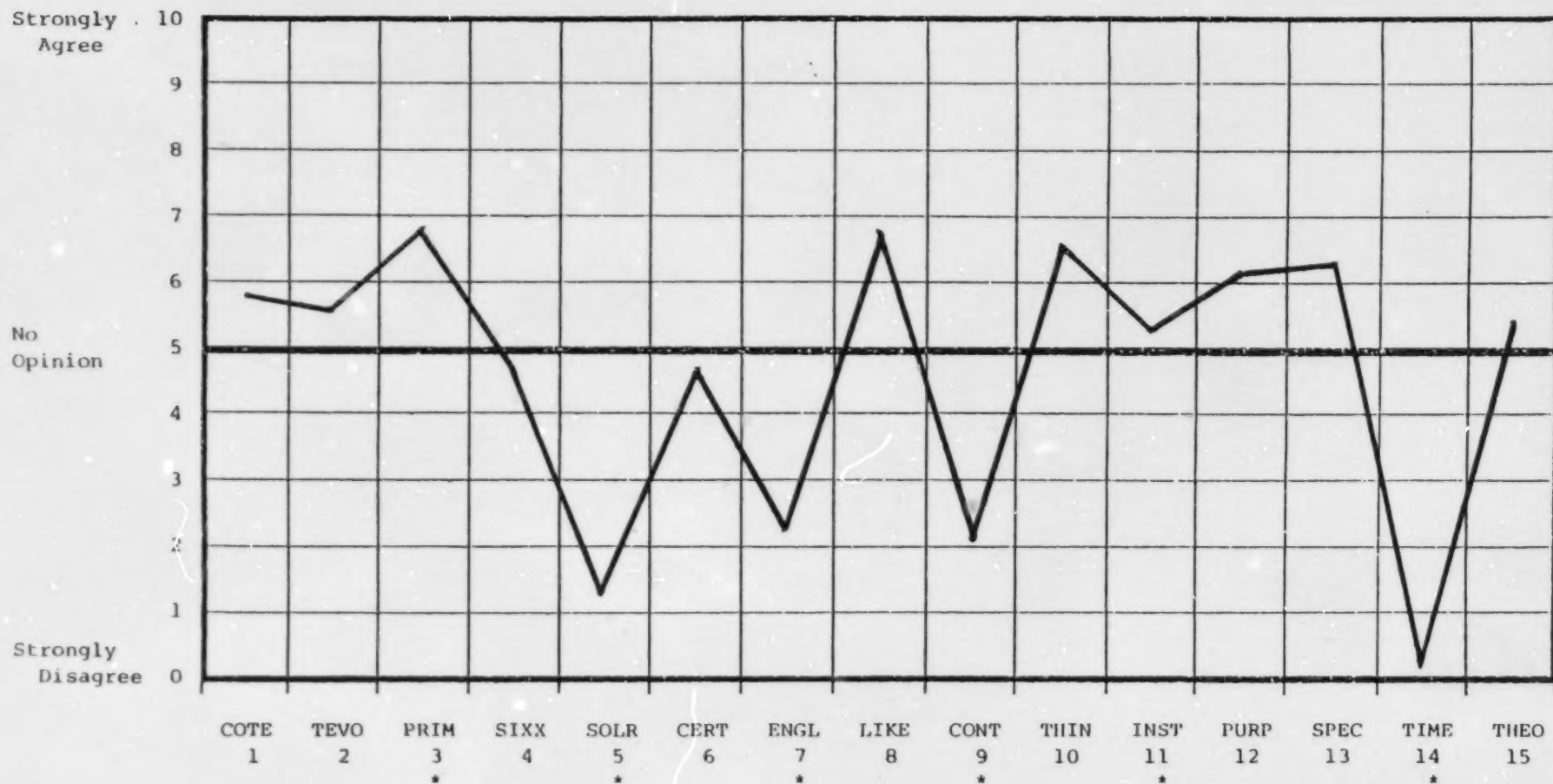


* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 9 No 26 No Response 2

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban _____ Suburban 3



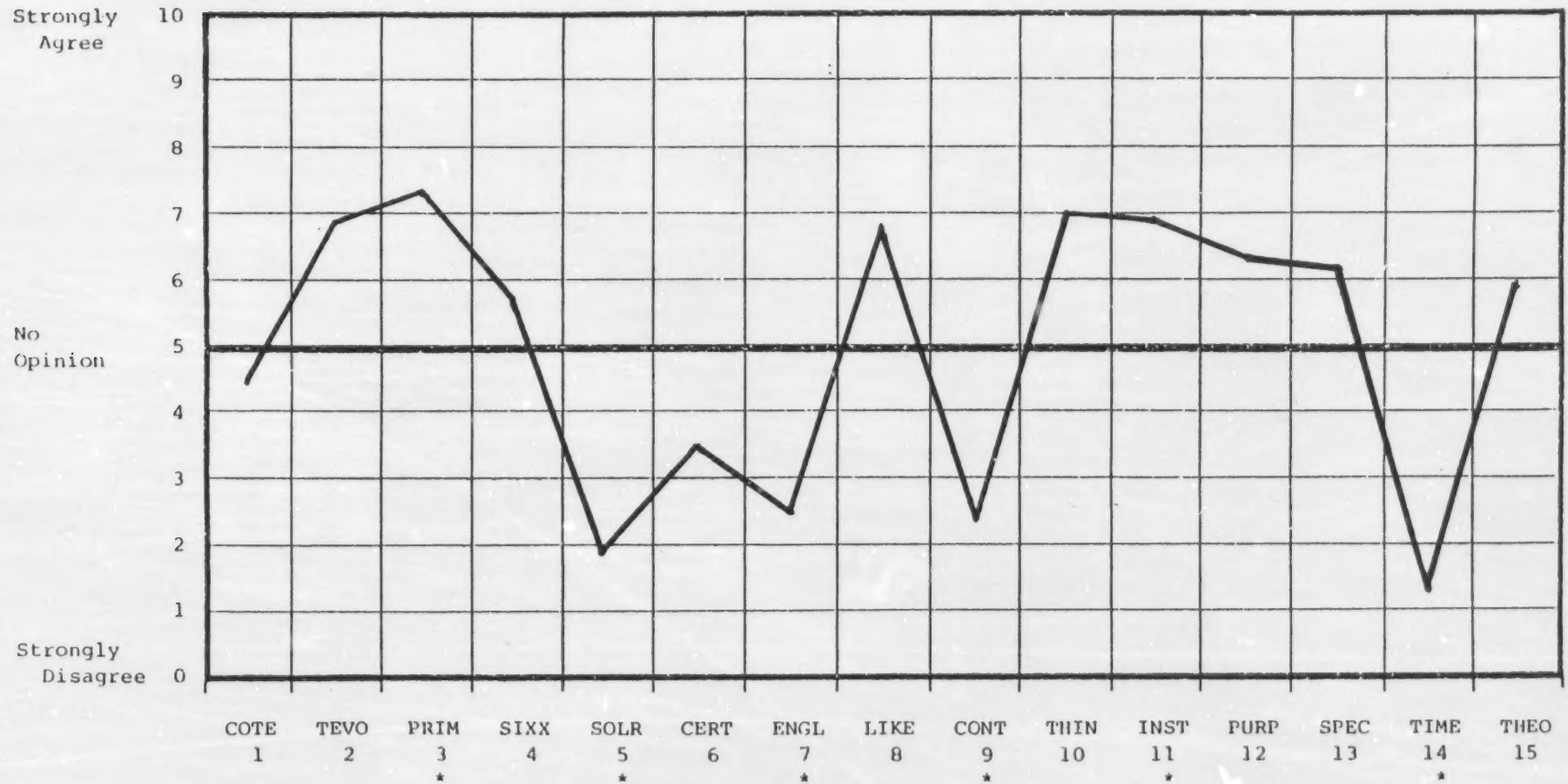
* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 5 No 17 No Response 0

GRAPH - 13

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban _____ Suburban 4



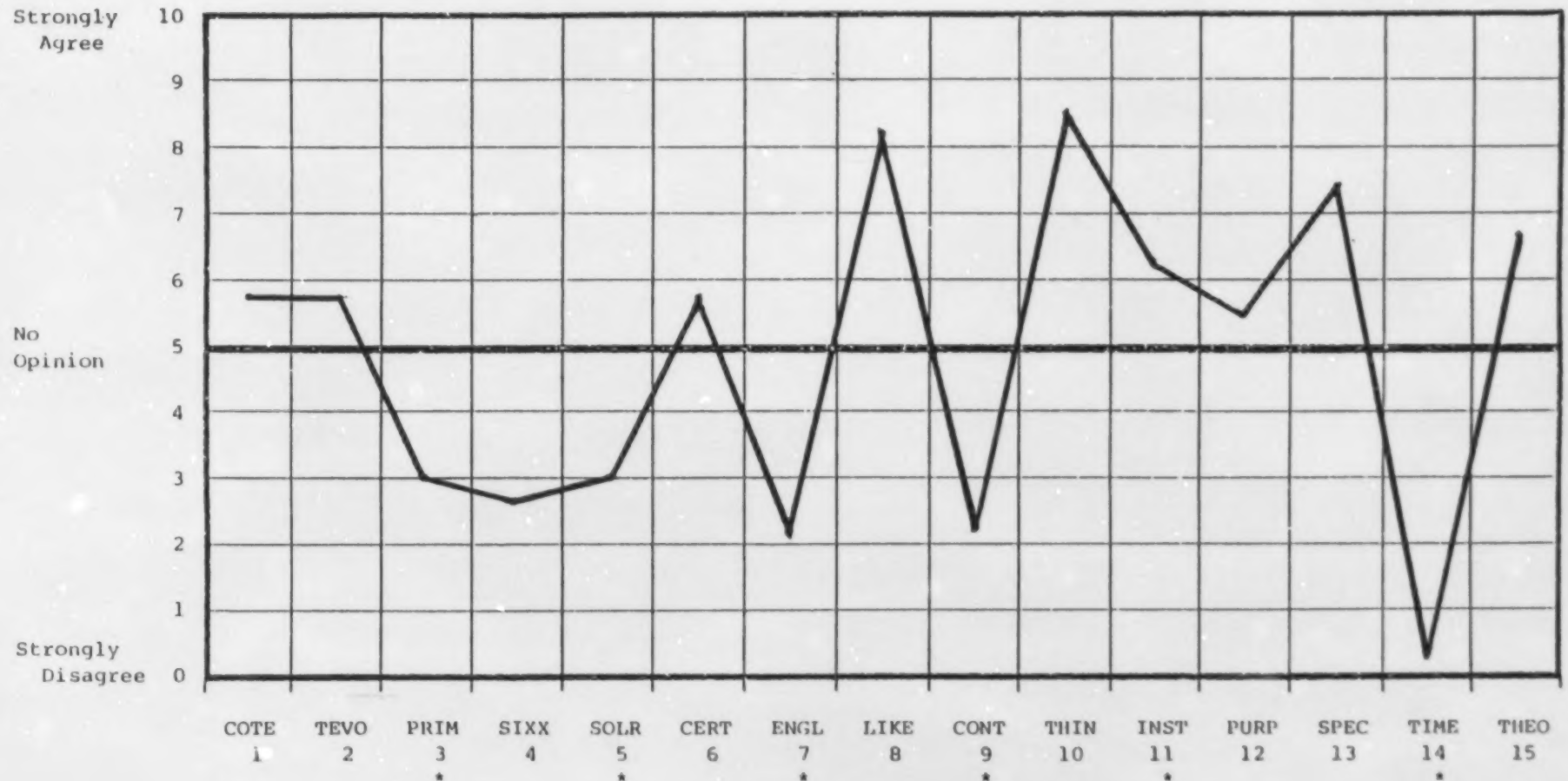
* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 9 No 18 No Response 2

GRAPH - 14

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban _____ Suburban 5

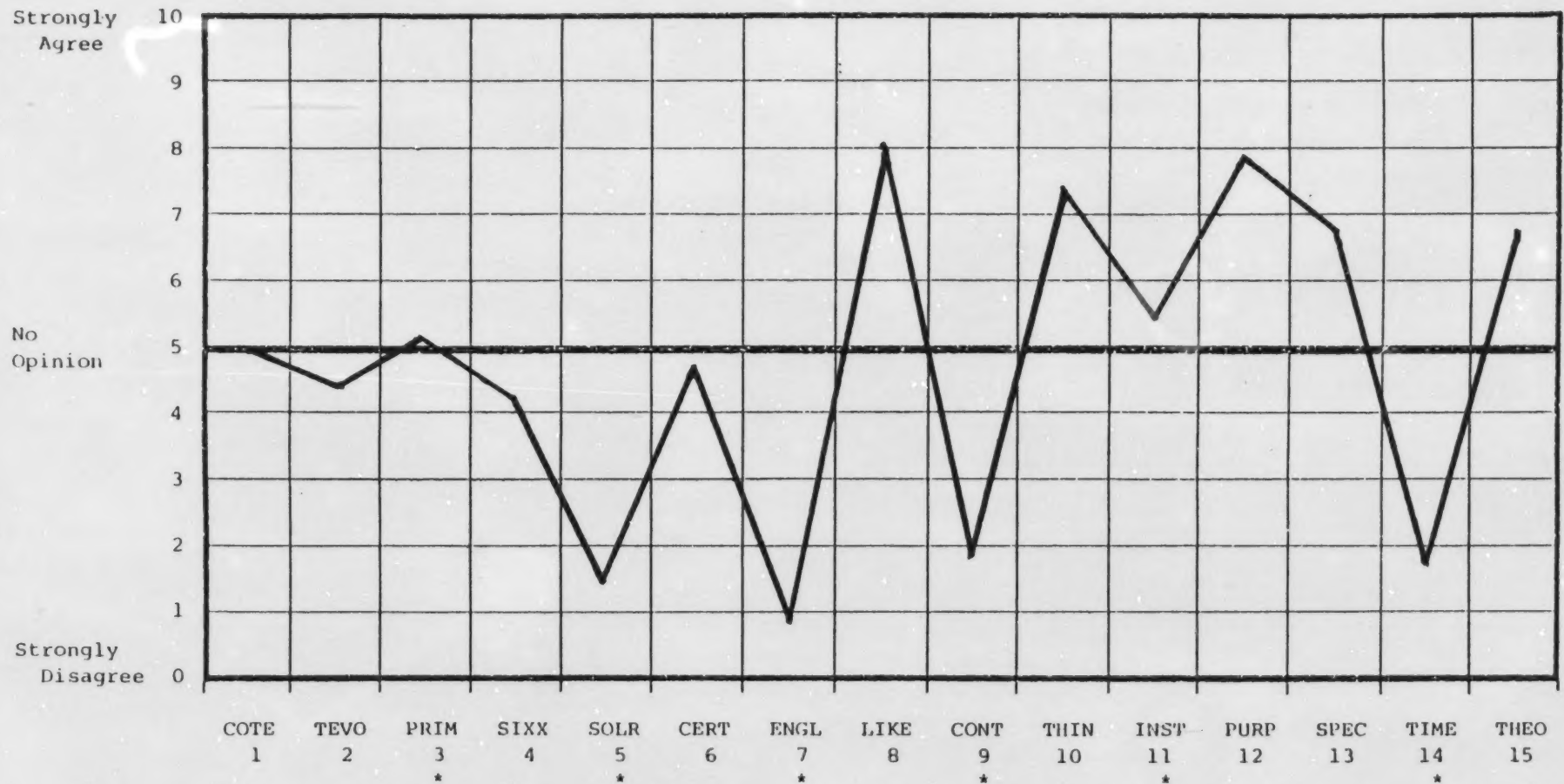


* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 1 No 6 No Response 0

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban _____ Suburban 6



* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 6 No 5 No Response 0

statement 7 (ENGL) that only the English teacher should be responsible for teaching reading in secondary schools.

The teachers in suburban high school five (S-5) and six (S-6) were the only ones in this category who strongly agreed on statement eight (LIKE) that a teacher who wants to improve students' interest in reading should show them that he or she likes to read. S-5 teachers also strongly agreed with statement 10 (THIN) that teachers should help students think on an interpretive level as well as the literal level.

Professional Preparation. Traditionally high school teachers have not been required to take a reading methods course in order to become provisionally certified to teach. That is to say, in the past content teachers were trained to teach their subject and had little, if any, obligation to teach reading skills. Now, during the present decade and for the future, more and more states are requiring at least one reading course for certification.

High school teachers participating in the present study were asked to indicate whether or not they had a reading course. Their responses to this question are presented in Table IV. From this table it can be discerned that although many teachers have had a reading methods course, far more have not. On the average, there were

TABLE IV

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION

TEACHERS WHO HAVE TAKEN A READING METHODS COURSE

Geographical Areas	Yes	No	No Response	Totals
<u>Rural</u>				
R-1	9	11	1	21
R-2	16	25	1	42
R-3	4	12	0	16
R-4	4	11	1	16
R-5	8	18	0	26
R-6	3	6	0	9
Totals	<u>44</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>130</u>
<u>Urban</u>				
U-1	32	36	1	69
U-2	14	37	0	51
U-3	4	10	1	15
Totals	<u>50</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>135</u>
<u>Suburban</u>				
S-1	1	15	1	17
S-2	9	26	2	37
S-3	5	17	0	22
S-4	9	18	2	29
S-5	1	6	0	7
S-6	6	5	0	11
Totals	<u>31</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>123</u>
Grand Total	125	253	10	388

about twice as many secondary teachers (N = 253) who did not take a reading course than those who did (N = 125). Ten teachers did not respond.

The ratio of responses shows that for the rural areas roughly half (47 per cent) of the teachers had a reading course. In the urban areas about 60 per cent of the teachers took a reading course. In the suburban areas proportionally fewer teachers (36 per cent) had such a course.

These data (teacher preparation) can be compared with the composite graphs appearing on the following pages. In graph 16 (RURAL TOTAL) it will be noted that there are stronger pro-reading opinions about statements 5 (SOLR), 10 (THIN), and 14 (TIME). In graph 17 (URBAN TOTALS) the teachers had strong pro-reading opinions about statements 5 (SOLR) and 14 (TIME). So did the suburban teachers as presented in graph 18 (SUBURBAN TOTALS). These same urban teachers, of whom only 36 per cent have had reading courses, appear to have few other strong opinions about the need for teaching reading skills to their students. Most of their responses fall into the no opinion or mild agreement-disagreement categories.

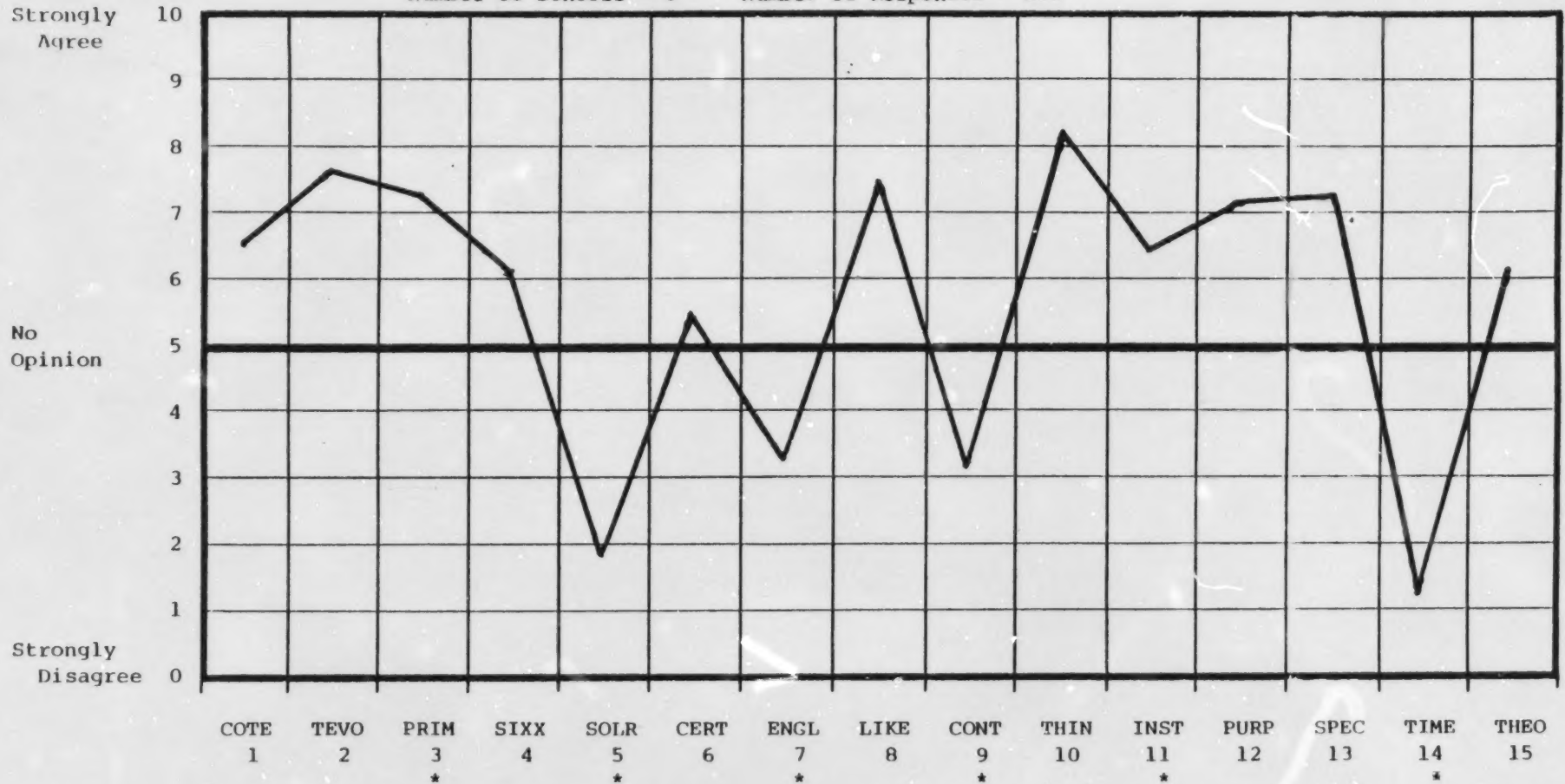
On the other hand, urban teachers of whom 60 per cent had taken reading courses, expressed stronger feelings about statement 2 on teaching technical vocabulary,

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural ** Urban Suburban

RURAL TOTAL

Number of Schools = 6 Number of Responses = 130



* -- negative response is positive

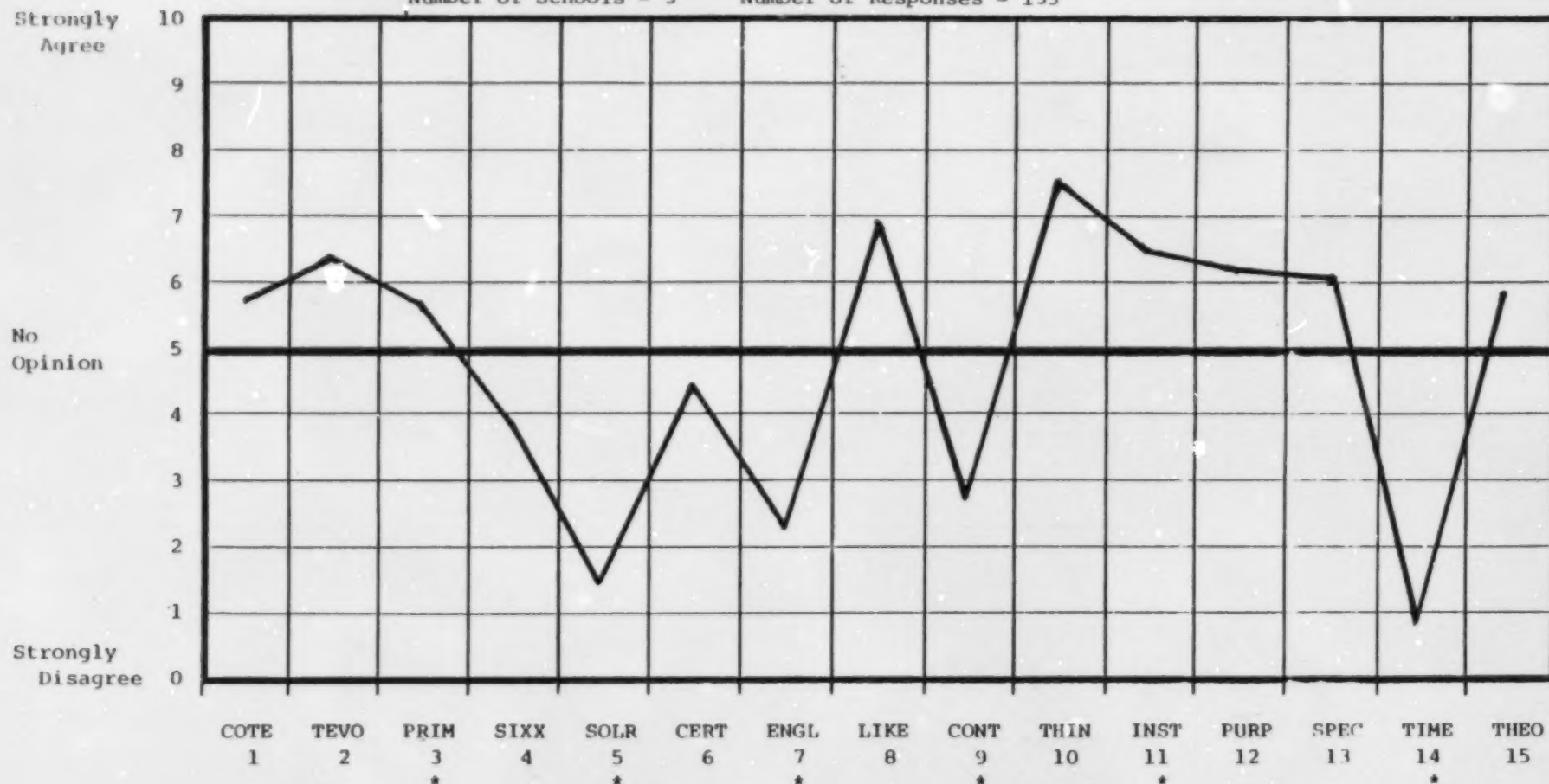
Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 44 No 83

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban ** _____ Suburban _____

URBAN TOTAL

Number of Schools = 3 Number of Responses = 135



* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 50 No 83

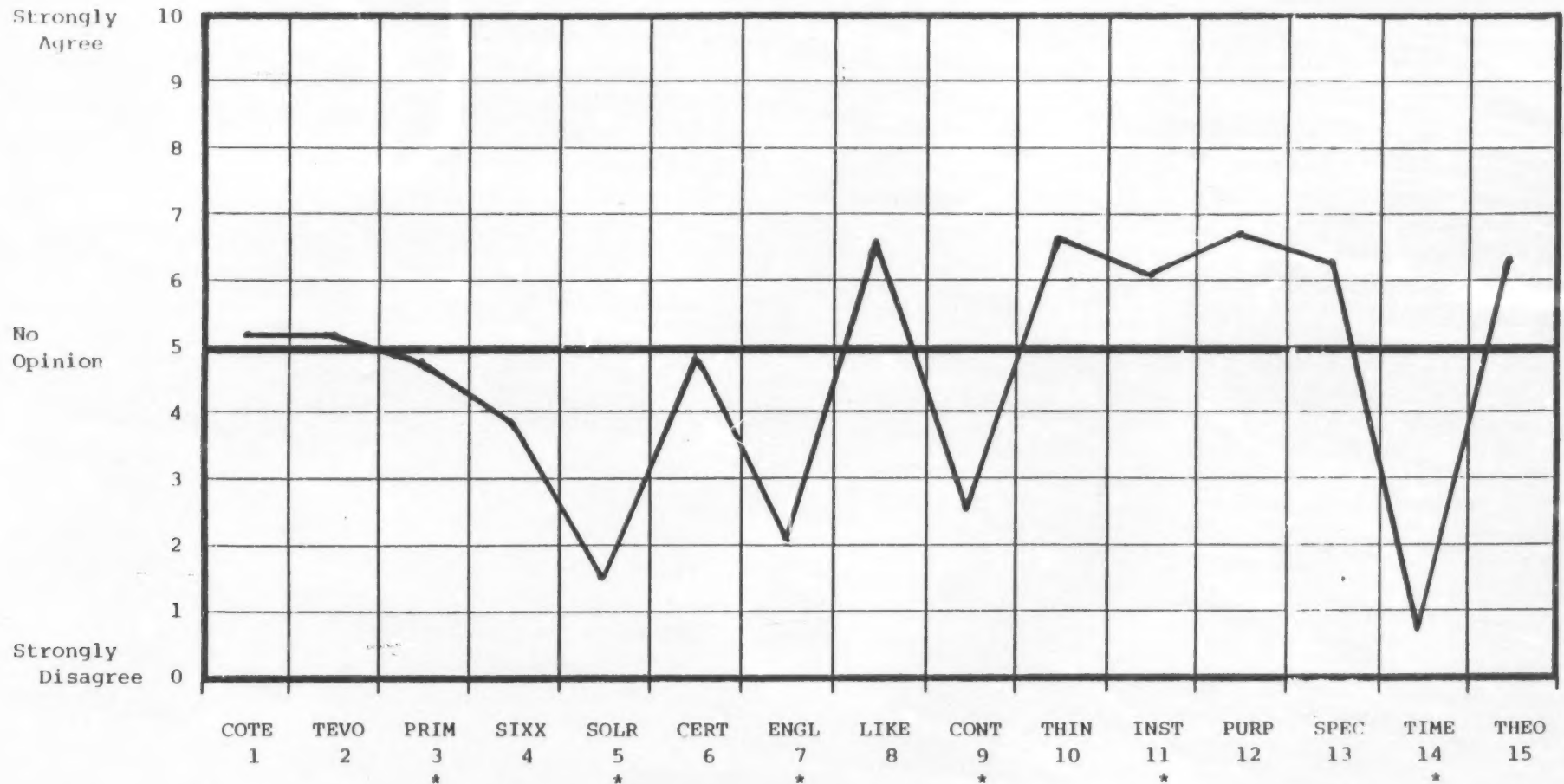
GRAPH - 18

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural _____ Urban _____ Suburban ** _____

SUBURBAN TOTALS

Number of Schools = 6 Number of Responses = 123



* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 31 No 87

but had no opinion about statement 6 on reading as a certification requirement. Moreover, these same teachers did not believe it necessary for them to know the theoretical processes of reading as noted in statement 15 (THEO).

An examination of graph 16 (RURAL TOTAL), in which almost half the teachers took a reading course, reveals some striking differences of opinion for some questions. They appear to differ more markedly from their urban and suburban colleagues in several ways. In statements 2 on introducing technical vocabulary (TEVO), 3 on their primary responsibility (PRIM), and 4 on the sufficiency of six years of reading instruction (SIXX) there were significant differences. The rural teachers agreed or agreed strongly with the statements. Urban and suburban teachers either had no opinion or mildly disagreed.

Professional Assignments. In the last part of the questionnaire teachers were asked to note their major field of preparation and to list the subjects they taught. The purpose of this section was to discover just how many teachers were teaching in their chosen field and how many were teaching subjects other than those for which they had been trained.

This information is given in Table V. It is reassuring to note that the overwhelming majority of the partici-

TABLE V
PROFESSIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

School Area	Within Subject	Outside Field	No Response (or other)	Total
<u>Rural</u>				
R-1	17	4	0	21
R-2	39	3	0	42
R-3	15	1	0	16
R-4	13	1	2	16
R-5	24	1	1	26
R-6	6	2	1	9
	<u>114</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>130</u>
<u>Urban</u>				
U-1	62	4	3	69
U-2	48	2	1	51
U-3	14	1	0	15
	<u>124</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>135</u>
<u>Suburban</u>				
S-1	15	1	1	17
S-2	36	1	0	37
S-3	21	1	0	22
S-4	24	2	3	29
S-5	5	2	0	7
S-6	9	1	1	11
	<u>110</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>123</u>

pants are, indeed, teaching the subjects in their major areas of competence.

Of the 130 teachers in rural areas, 114 were teaching in their subject field. Twelve were not. Four teachers did not respond. This results in a per cent score of 88 for this group. The twelve who were not teaching in their chosen field, percentage-wise amounted to .09.

Urban teachers (and students) were even more fortunate. Of the 135 responses, it will be noted that 124 (92 per cent) were teaching in their field of preparation. Seven (7 per cent) were not. Four teachers did not respond to this part of the questionnaire.

Suburban teachers were in the middle. Of the 123 respondents, 110 were teaching in their field. This amounts to 89 per cent. Eight teachers (7 per cent) were teaching outside their field. Five teachers did not respond.

Discussion. The Vaughan Survey (as amended) revealed information about secondary teacher attitude toward the need for teaching reading skills to students. Opinions and feelings ranged widely on some statements yet revealed significant consistency on others. Overall, there seems to be more agreement among the teachers than disagreement, the only difference is in degree or intensity.

The pattern of agreement among the participating teachers is consistent in the following questionnaire statements:

- *5. (SOLR) The sole responsibility for teaching students how to study should lie with reading teachers.

All three groups strongly disagreed with this statement.

- 6. (CERT) Knowing how to teach reading in content areas should be required for secondary teaching certification.

There was no opinion on this statement.

- *7. (ENGL) Only English teachers should be responsible for teaching reading in secondary schools. Teachers disagreed with this statement.

- 8. (LIKE) A teacher who wants to improve students' interest in reading should show them that he or she likes to read.

Teachers agreed with this point (mild agreement).

- *9. (CONT) Content teachers should teach content and leave reading instruction to reading teachers. Teachers disagreed with this statement (mild disagreement).

*11. (INST) Content area teachers should feel a greater responsibility to the content they teach than to any reading instruction they may be able to provide. There was mild agreement on this point.

*14. (TIME) Reading instruction in secondary schools is a waste of time. Not only did most teachers concur with this statement but they also indicated strong disagreement with the idea.

15. (THEO) Content area teachers should be familiar with (the) theoretical concepts of the reading process.

Teachers had no opinion on this point and, again, their responses were consistent in all three groups.

Of the fifteen statements in the Vaughan Survey, participants were in closest agreement with #14 (TIME). They indicated strong disagreement about secondary reading instruction being a waste of time. They also disagreed strongly with #5 (SOLR) that only reading teachers should teach students study skills.

In teacher preparation it is noted that for rural teachers 44 had a reading course, but 33 did not. The urban group fared better because 50 had such a course,

while 83 did not. In the suburban areas 31 had taken a reading methods course but 87 had not.

For professional assignments, 114 rural teachers were teaching in their chosen field. Twelve were not. In the urban areas 124 teachers were in their fields -- 7 were not. And in the suburban areas 110 were in their fields -- 8 were not.

Conclusions. From the data proffered, it would seem that the following conclusions are warranted:

1. Most high school teachers strongly agree that teaching reading skills to students is not a waste of time.
2. They are also in strong agreement that the reading teacher is not the only one who should teach students how to study.
3. Secondary teachers believe that they should teach their students how to think on an interpretive as well as literal level.
4. They also believe that they should show students that they, themselves enjoy reading.

In addition to these conclusions, the Vaughan Scale (as revised) indicated that about half the participating teachers had taken a reading methods course. However, for the questions, "Knowing how to teach reading in content

areas should be required for secondary teaching certification" (6-CERT), responses clustered around number 5 (no opinion).

In general, it would seem that secondary teachers are consistent in their responses to most of the questions on the Vaughan Scale. There are variations between rural, urban and suburban groups in their obligation to help students improve reading ability (COTE), on teaching technical vocabulary (TEVO), their primary responsibility in teaching subject matter (PRIM), and whether or not students can learn to read in six years (SIXX). But in the remaining areas questioned, there was close agreement. So it would appear that the location of the school, rural-urban-suburban, has little impact on teacher opinions about teaching reading skills. (see summary graph)

Recommendations for Further Study. Data from the Vaughan Scale indicate teacher opinions regarding the need for teaching reading skills to students. Whatever the responses are, there is no guarantee that these opinions will manifest themselves in classroom teacher action or behavior. Teachers will have beliefs of one sort or another and may choose to do something or nothing for any number of reasons.

SECONDARY READING: WHAT DO THE TEACHERS THINK?

High school area Rural --- Urban ++++ Suburban ———

RURAL TOTAL

Number of Schools = 6

Number of Responses = 130

URBAN TOTAL

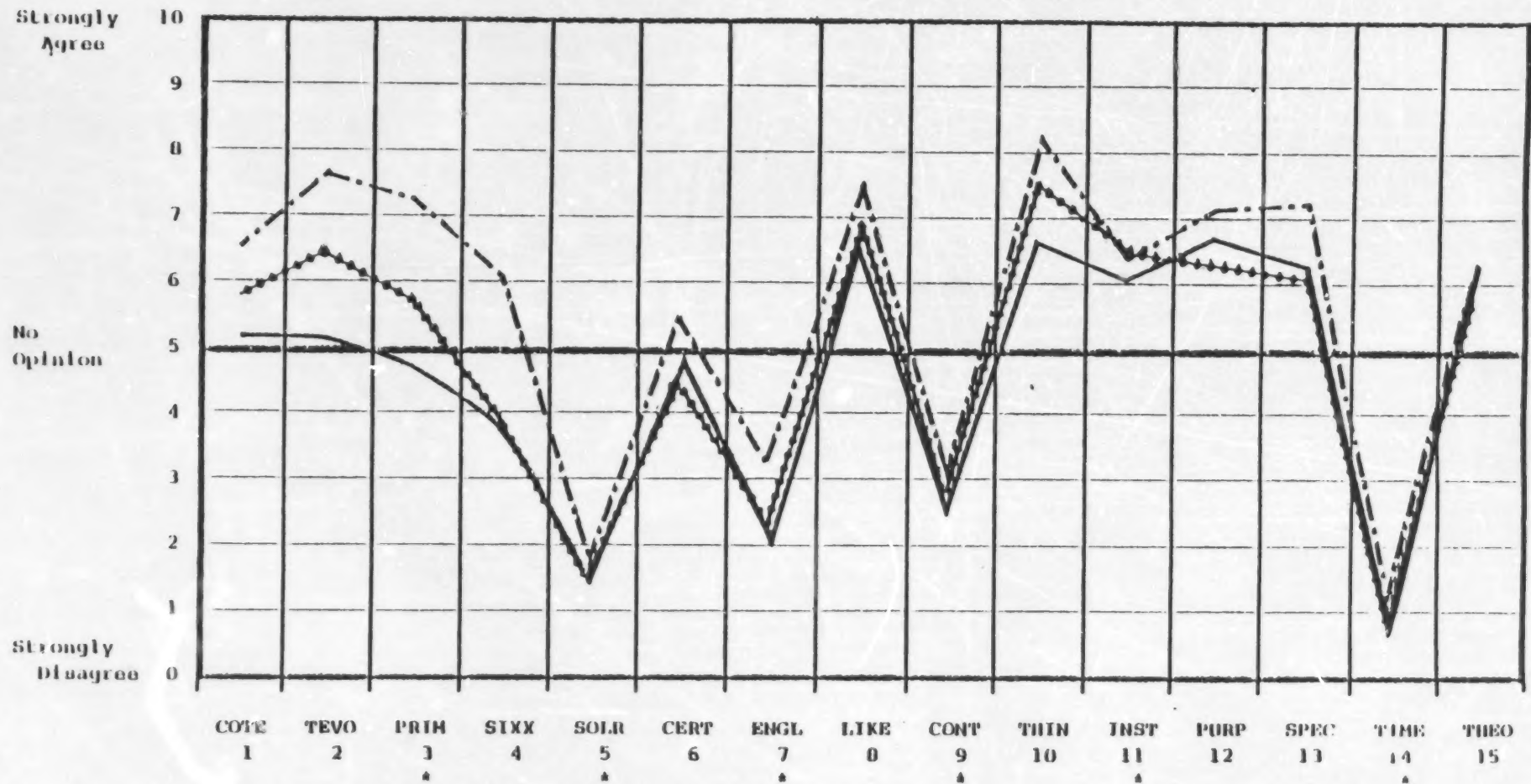
Number of Schools = 3

Number of Responses = 135

SUBURBAN TOTALS

Number of Schools = 6

Number of Responses = 123



* -- negative response is positive

Have you taken a reading methods course Yes 125 No 253

Now that teacher attitudes about teaching reading skills to their students have been ascertained, it is necessary to move on to another important phase of secondary education. It is imperative that teacher knowledge of reading skills be determined. That is to say, teacher awareness of the reading skills needed by students at the secondary level should be uncovered. Do high school teachers know the nature of the reading skills needed by their students? If they do, are appropriate reading skills taught? If not, what is done in the classroom?

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